need for air transport services of different regions of the country including North-East region. It is, however, up to the airlines to provide air services to specific places depending upon the traffic demand and commercial viability subject to compliance of route dispersal guidelines issued by Government.

Indian Airlines has presently no plans to increase services to/from Tirupati due to low traffic.

Discount scheme on international routes

647. SHRIMATI BIMBA RAIKAR: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether due to a sharp drop in domestic airfares and introduction of low-budget schemes by domestic carriers, there has been a sudden spurt in passenger traffic;

(b) whether foreign airlines from the neighbouring countries and from far-east are offering low fares with holiday packages to lure away Indian tourists at tariffs equal to long-haul domestic segments; and

(c) if so, what steps are being taken to prevent Indian tourists from being lured away by foreign airlines?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI SHRIPAD YESSO NAIK): (a) With the introduction of APEX Fare Schemes and other value added products by various domestic airlines, there has been an increase of 5.07 lakhs in passenger traffic in the year 2002 as compared to the year 2001.

(b) Some foreign airlines have offered low fares with holiday packages.

(c) Indian Airlines maintain their services competitively by upgrading and adding value to their products and by introduction of promotional fares. Indian Airlines has also introduced "Packaged Tour for Promotion of Domestic Tourism" with effect from 1st March, 2002 and the APEX Fare Scheme has been extended upto 31st March, 2003.